south dakota
STARS
Student Teacher Accountability and Reporting System
connections

SD-STARS Has Much To Offer SD Schools

The South Dakota Department of Education began work on SD-STARS more than one year ago. By connecting the systems, the data can "talk" to one another, increasing the Department's ability to make data driven decisions and helping with federal and state reporting. When the potential benefits for districts became evident, the project expanded to include district users.
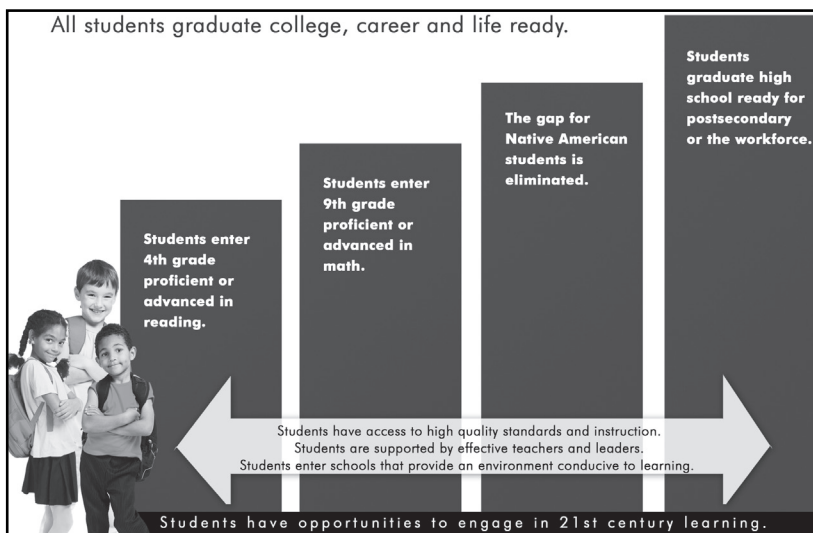
Opening SD-STARS to as many as 10,000 potential local users is a big undertaking and requires cooperation from districts. "We designed SD-STARS to be as easy as possible for districts, but it will require districts to do some work," said Marcus Bevier, one of the SD-STARS Project Managers.

Each user will need an account and a password. To make this easier, SD-STARS uses data within Infinite Campus to automatically create accounts and assign security in SD-STARS. Districts will still have

INSIDE:

SD-STARS Measures Goals

The South Dakota Department of Education recently identified four student outcomes that are vital to ensuring its aspiration that all students will be college, career and life ready when they exit K-12. Students will enter 4th grade proficient or advanced in reading, and enter 9th grade proficient or advanced in math. The gap for Native American students will be eliminated, and students will graduate high school ready for postsecondary or the workforce.

All students graduate college, career and life ready.

Students enter 4th grade proficient or advanced in reading.

Students enter 9th grade proficient or advanced in math.

The gap for Native American students is eliminated.

Students graduate high school ready for postsecondary or the workforce.

Students have access to high quality standards and instruction. Students are supported by effective teachers and leaders. Students enter schools that provide an environment conducive to learning.

Students have opportunities to engage in 21st century learning.

Research shows these benchmark outcomes are paramount to achieving success throughout a student's educational journey. Department administrators believe SD-STARS will be a key component in measuring these objectives and will allow educators at all levels to quickly adjust their strategies to meet these goals.

"By measuring our progress, we can determine what to do at the state level to promote these goals and support local efforts," said Steve Fiechtner, SDDOE's Delivery Unit Head.

Using data within SD-STARS, the Department can calculate the current status, what

programs are working, and if the goals are met. "We have always had lots of data and sometimes it is overwhelming. By tracking these four outcomes with a single streamlined effort, we can focus the entire state on this common vision."

Giving districts access to the data will help communicate this common vision. Through SD-STARS, the SDDOE can create reports for teachers, schools, districts and the Department.

For example, the Department could offer a report in SD-STARS that measures and monitors math proficiency levels on the DSTEP for grades 3-8. This may illustrate if the proficiency rate remains the same or if there is a key grade where the rate increases or decreases. By making these reports available, educators can use the data to make informed decisions for the benefit of the students.

"Our hope is that these four outcomes and the data within SD-STARS will provide specific areas that will help make sure all students graduate college, career and life ready," Fiechtner said.

Contact Us:

SD-STARS: A Positive Step In Helping SD Educators

Karen Wagner, Belle Fourche School District

As educators, we are well aware of the need for data-driven decisions to improve student performance and impact instruction. The development of the SD-STARS longitudinal data system has been a positive step in helping educators access a variety of data about students in a straight-forward manner.

A uniqueness of SD-STARS is the warehouse concept, which affords a one-stop location for multiple sources of data. Educators now have a tool to help them organize the various pieces of data such as assessments, attendance and discipline.

The dashboard display is an option where visual reports, such as graphs and charts, can be created. This option puts relevant data into the hands of teachers so they are able to discuss and analyze the significance of the information as it relates to instruction and their students. Our teachers are busy, so data must be useful and uncomplicated if we want them to use it.

The SD-STARS project is a work in progress. Once it rolls out this Spring, I feel teachers and administrators will recognize the benefits.

SD-STARS and Local Assessments

Many districts asked about whether SD-STARS will have the ability to upload local assessments, such as DIBELS, AIMSweb, MAP (NWEA) and other formative assessments. The short answer is yes. The long answer is a bit more complicated.

The data from local assessments would need to be loaded into SD-STARS by SDDOE. Because of this, SDDOE first needs to determine which local assessments to load. Feedback from districts is essential when making this decision, as only those assessments used by multiple districts should be considered.

The second step is to determine how SD-STARS would get the data. There are two main ways this could happen. The first (and preferred) way is to get a file and load it

into SD-STARS. Ideally, this file would come from and be scored by the vendor and would contain all South Dakota students who took the assessment. The second way is to have SD-STARS load the data directly from an assessment tab created by SDDOE within Infinite Campus. This would be ideal for tests that are scored by teachers.

The third step is to design reports so that districts can access the data through SD-STARS. For that, district input would be needed.

Currently, the SDDOE is focused on improving data quality and loading existing pieces of data such as Infinite Campus and state assessments; but the Department has started initial conversations about loading local assessments.

Ask the Experts

How does SD-STARS relates to vocational or non-BOR institutions?

The SDDOE has begun discussions with vocational institutes. Just like with BOR institutes, the SDDOE hopes to track vocational institutes participation and performance data for high school graduates. For non-BOR institutions, the SDDOE is exploring if data from the National Student Clearinghouse could be loaded into SD-STARS. Both of these initiatives, as well as the work with the BOR, are long-term projects. For now, SD-STARS is focusing only on K12 data.

How do districts request a report?

In the future, districts can request new reports for SD-STARS. Since these reports will be available to all districts, SDDOE recommends that requests for new reports are developed by multiple districts (ex: through an ESA) or with a SDDOE division. The first step will be to fill out a report request form. Once the request form is received by the SDDOE, it will go to a report committee for approval and next steps.

I found a data error in a SD-STARS report. What should I do?

First, check the source system. SD-STARS displays the data as the data appear in the source system. For example, if a male student is noted as female in Infinite Campus, then it will be incorrect in SD-STARS as well. Once the district corrects the error in the source system, SD-STARS will reflect the change the next day. If the source system is correct but SD-STARS is incorrect, then districts should contact the SDDOE with their concerns.

Could SD-STARS Look At Group Differences Over Time?

Yes – SD-STARS has the capacity to look at differences in group outcomes over time.

For example, some research studies indicate that there are gender differences in STEM subjects. A SD-STARS report could look at science scores for males and females within the same group of students (ex: classroom) starting from their first tested grade (ex: 3rd grade) to their last (ex: 11th grade).

Districts could use this information to determine if there is a gap and how the gap changes over their academic career. If there is a gap, the district could implement an intervention (ex: curriculum change) and then use the same report to look at a future group to determine if that intervention worked.

Offer SD Schools Con't

the responsibility to review and approve the accounts, but approval can be as easy as clicking a checkbox. Districts will also need to draft, review, and enforce any policies regarding privacy of student data. With so many users, it is important to clearly explain what the district expects of SD-STARS users.

In return for their cooperation, SDDOE is building SD-STARS with local educators in mind. Bevier says, "With help from pilot districts, we've been designing reports that superintendents, principals, and teachers may find useful." Currently, there are

three topics of reports: enrollment, assessment and attendance.

One of the favorites is the Achievement Cut Score report, which helps identify the "bubble" students using the DSTEP results. Another popular report is the ACT Stoplight Report. The report will help counselors identify students who will need remediation in college and those who can apply for scholarships.

Dashboards offer an "at-a-glance" review of basic enrollment, assessment and attendance data. One of the favorites is

the Withdrawal Distribution. Using a pie chart, users can see the top five reasons why people are withdrawing from their school and compare it to prior years. Of particular concern would be the proportion and number of dropouts.

Bevier concludes, "This is just the beginning. We've already started to think about the next set of reports as well as how to load district assessment data, like DIBELS or MAP. Our long-term plan is to link with post-secondary and Labor data to get long-term outcomes."

STARS Manual Is Here To Help

As more people hear about SD-STARS, many questions on system details are pouring in. Districts sought out answers to their questions by contacting their ESA Data STARS or sending emails to SDDOE. Now, there is a third way.

The SDDOE drafted a STARS Manual for district use. Although still in a draft version and missing some sections, this manual contains the answers to many questions on SD-STARS. "How does SD-STARS use job titles to assign security?" "What should I do if a staff leaves the school and no longer needs access to SD-STARS?" "What are dashboards and how do I use them?" These are just a few questions that can be answered with the information found in the STARS Manual. The manual also contains screenshots, step-by-step directions, flow charts, and detailed discussion on the design and implementation of SD-STARS.

SDDOE recommends the manual to district staff members who will be managing SD-STARS accounts (called STARS Account Managers) and those who work closely with Infinite Campus. To get an electronic copy of the draft manual or to provide any feedback on the manual, contact your ESA Data STARS today.

National STARS: Georgia

One major benefit of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) is the ability to get data into the hands of people who can use it to inform instruction and local administrative decisions. However, many states struggle giving SLDS access to and offer training for teachers and school administrators. Contrary to the norm, Georgia has been very successful in incorporating these key personnel in their system.

Although it is fairly young, Georgia's SLDS is widely used by teachers because it has always been very district-focused. According to Georgia's Chief Information Officer (CIO), Bob Swiggum, "We currently have 51 percent, 60,000 out of our 117,000 teachers trained and using the SLDS in their classrooms." Georgia foresees having nearly 100,000 or 85 percent of teachers on the system and using it by the 2013-14 school year.

Teachers are not just in the system – they are actively incorporating the data from the SLDS into their daily responsibilities. A good example of this is using the data for parent conferences. Because the system offers reports at the click of a button, it makes quick work of powerful evidence that used to take hours or days to compile and analyze.

Teachers are speaking highly of the system, too. Janice Peace, a Math teacher in Hall County, had this to say after reviewing a transfer student's records from the Georgia SLDS. "I was able to see exactly how many days he had [attended] during his previous two years of middle school. I wanted him to know that I knew his absences were putting him at a disadvantage (not due to anything within his control), and that I wanted to help him get 'caught up' in the areas that he might've missed."

This is a powerful example of a teacher utilizing the SLDS to help right the educational course for a student. All of this would have been improbable or would have taken many hours without the SLDS. Georgia's SLDS is just one example of how data can make the lives of teachers and administrators easier. It offers local educators the tools they need to diagnose issues and strengths in a timely manner and focus their efforts back on educating students. For more information about Georgia's SLDS, check out http://slds.doe.k12.ga.us/Pages/SLDS.aspx.

ESA DATA STARS

Every ESA has representatives who have been trained in SD-STARS. They are ready and willing to answer your questions. If you don't know your ESA assignment, go to sdesa.k12.sd.us.

Region 1	Lisa Reinhiller	lisa.reinhiller@k12.sd.us
Region 2	Pat Hubert	phubert@edec.org
Region 2	Crystal Mengenhausen	cmengenhausen@edec.org
Region 3	Sara Fridley	sara.fridley@k12.sd.us
Region 3	Roxane Dyk	roxane.dyk@k12.sd.us
Region 5	Holly Schumacher	holly.schumacher@k12.sd.us
Region 5	Janeen Outka	janeen.outka@k12.sd.us
Region 6	Jeanne Cowan	jcowan@tie.net
Region 6	Gavin Woltjer	gwoltjer@tie.net
Region 7	Pam Lange	plange@tie.net
Region 7	Janet Hensley	jhensley@tie.net